

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTO 01869 201911Z

ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 364

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY CURACAO

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 1869

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, DR

SUBJ: CIVAIR: US AIRLINE SERVICE IN CARIBBEAN

REF: STATE 80723

1. CONCERNING UPCOMING CAB STUDY OF US AIRLINE ROUTE STRUCTURE BETWEEN THE US AND THE CARIBBEAN AIREA, THIS EMBASSY HAS ALREADY DETECTED DETERIORATION IN AIRLINE SERICE HERE AND EXPECTS THAT THE PROBLEM WILL INCREASE UNLESS CHANGES ARE MADE.

2. WITH THE CANCELLATION OF DIFFERENT PAN AMERICAN ROUTES IN THE AREA AND THE INCREASING TRAVEL BETWEEN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND THE UNITED STATES, THERE HAVE BEEN IN THE LAST THREE OR FOUR YEARS SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH AIRLINE SERVICE DURING THE WINTER MONTHS AND TO A CERTAIN EXTENT IN JULY AND AUGUST.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 SANTO 01869 201911Z

3. SOME FIFTY- TO SIXTY THOUSAND DOMINICANS RESIDENT IN THE NEW YORK AREA RETURN TO VISIT THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC DURING SPECIAL HOLIDAY PERIODS IN AUGUST AND PARTICULARLY IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY. DURING THE LATTER PERIOD THE DOMINICAN GOVERNMENT GRANTS THESE "ABSENT DOMINICANS" DUTY-FREE PRIVILEGES WITH THE RESULTS THAT THEY RETURN FROM THE US BY AIR LOADED WITH BAGGAGE

WHCIH INCLUDES SUCH ITEMS AS TV SETS, BABY CRIBS, AND LAMP SHADES. AMERICANS AND OTHER RESIDENTS IN THE DR WHO HAVE CHILDREN STUDYING IN THE US START TRYING AS EARLY AS SEPTEMBER EACH YEAR TO NAIL DOWN AIRLINE RESERVATIONS FOR DECEMBER AND JANUARY. ALTHOUGH ADDITIONAL FLIGHTS HAVE ANNUALLY BEEN ADDED DURING THE DECEMBER-JANUARY PERIOD, A SERIOUS PROBLEM OF SPACE AVAILABILITY STILL REMAINS AT THIS TIME OF YEAR.

4. BUT NOW THE PROBLEM OF SPACE AVAILABILITY IS BECOMING EXTENDED OVER GREATER PERIODS OF THE YEAR. THE COMINICAN REPUBLIC IS BEGINNING TO BOOM IN TOURISM AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO BOOM A GREAT DEAL MORE WITH THE AMOUNT OF RESOURCES WHICH DOMINICAN GOVERNMENT IS PUTTING INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS SECTOR.

5. US-OWNED GULF & WESTERN, WHICH NOW HAS FOUR LUXURY-CLASS HOTELS IN THE DR, THREE OF THEM NEW, IS PROMOTING TOURISM HERE QUITE HEAVILY. SO IS LOEWS.

6. WHEREAS TWO YEARS AGO THERE WAS ONLY ONE FIRST-CLASS HOTEL, THE EMBAJADOR, IN SANTO DOMINGO, THERE ARE NOW ALSO THE SANTO DOMINGO, HISPANIOLA, AND LOEWS DOMINICANA HOTELS, WITH SHERATORN NEARING COMPLETION. FOUR OR FIVE SLIGHTLY SMALLER HOTELS HAVE ALSO OPENED WITHIN THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS.

7. THERE IS CURRENTLY ONLY ONE US FLIGHT A DAY EACH WAY, PANAM 436 NORTHBOUND AND PANAM 431 SOUTHBOUND, BETWEEN SANTO DOMINGO AND MIAMI. PAN AMERICAN TENDS TO FAVOR SALES FOR THE FULL DISTANCE RATHER THAN THE LEGS BETWEEN SANTO DOMINGO AND PORT AU PRINCE OR PORT AU PRINCE AND MIAMI.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 SANTO 01869 201911Z

8. THE LATEST COMPLICATION IS A TRAVEL PACKAGE TO SANTO DOMINGO CURRENTLY BEING PROMOTOED BY THE LOEWS HOTEL CHAIN WHICH INCLUDES ONE DAY IN HAITI, WITH THE PARTICIPANTS FLYING FROM SANTO DOMINGO TO PORT AU PRINCE ON THE EARLY MORNING PANAM FLIGHT 436 AND RETURNING TO SANTO DOMINGO THE SAME DAY ON THE EVENING PANAM FLIGHT 431. THESE RESERVATIONS ARE COMPUTER-MADE AT DISTANT POINTS IN THE US WITH NO LOCAL CONTROL OR FOREKNOWLEDGE HERE. IN EFFECT, THESE PACKAGE TOURS TEND TO PRE-EMPT THE ONE US FLIGHT TO-AND-FROM MIAMI. THE EMBASSY IS BEING INCREASINGLY IMPORTUNED BY OFFICIAL US GOVERNMENT VISITORS AND OTHERS TO ASSIST IN COPING WITH THESE TIGHT TRAVEL CONDITIONS.

9. SINCE THE CAB IS UNDERTAKING A STUDY IN DEPTH OF THE ROUTE STRUCTURE BETWEEN THE US AND THE CARIBBEAN, THE EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO CALL TO ITS ATTENTION THAT THE LARGE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT PUERTO PLATA ON THE DOMINICAN NORTH COAST WILL BE COMPLETED IN THE LATE SPRING OF NEXT YEAR AND THAT WE CAN EXPECT TO RECEIVE A REQUEST FROM THE DOMINICAN GOVERNMENT TO AMEND OUR

BILATERAL AIR AGREEMENT IN ORDER TO HAVE SERVICE BETWEEN THE US AND PUERTO PLATA. THIS AIRPORT IS A PART OF THE DOMINICAN GOVERNMENT'S PROMOTION OF TOURISM ON THE NORTH COAST. SEVERAL YEARS AGO IT RECEIVED A \$20 MILLION WORLD BANK LOAN, T BE MATCHED BY AN EQUAL AMOUNT OF ITS OWN FUNDS, FOR THIS PURPOSE.

10. THE EMBASSY GATHERS THAT US AIRLINES DO NOT RPT NOT PARTICULARLY LIKE CO-TERMINAL POINTS. (THE SANTO DOMINGO-PUERTO PLATA SITUATION WOULD BE SOMEWHAT ANALGOUS TO THE KINGSTON-MONTEGO BAY CO-TERMINALS IN JAMAICA.) WHILE THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED US AIRLINES WOULD PROBABLY PREFER TO CONTINUE TO OVERFLY PUERTO PLATA, THE OLIGARCHS AND MONIED PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY, WHO AS A CLASS BUY MORE OF THE AIRLINE TICKETS, TEND TO BE CENTERED AROUND SANTIAGO IN THE FERTILE AGRICULTURAL AREA OF THE NORTH AND WILL ALMOST ASSUREDLY PRESSURE THE DOMINICAN GOVERNMENT TO HAVE PUERTO PLATA MADE A CO-TERMINAL POINT RATHER THAN AN AIRPORT MERELY SERVING CHARGER FLIGHTS.
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PAGE 04 SANTO 01869 201911Z

11. CONSIDERING THE DETERIORATION IN SERVICE ON THE ONE US MIAMI-SANTO DOMINGO FLIGHT NOW EXISTING, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE A GOOD CASE FOR PUERTO PLATA AS A CO-TERMINAL POINT.
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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